City's first mayor was born in Scotland

(Editor's note: This is the first in a series of articles by S. Robert Powell of Carbondale on the mayors of Carbondale that will be published in The Carbondale Mirror.)

James Archbald

On March 3, 1793, on Little Cumbrae Island, part of Buteshire, just off the shores of Ayreshire, in the west of Scotland, James Archbald, Carbondale's first mayor, was born.

James Archbald's paternal grandfather and father were both named James.

The latter (born 1763, died Aug. 3, 1824) was from Knockendon, Ayreshire. On Aug. 4, 1789, he married Mary Ann Wodrow, and the couple lived on Little Cumbrae Island, where the husband had before been the manager of a sheep farm.

Through his mother, Mary Ann Wodrow (born, June 24, 1764, died Jan. 3, 1841), James Archbald was descended from the Wodrow family, originally of England, but later of Renfrewshire, Scotland.

For 300 years prior to 1700, the possessed the hill of Eglishame and surrounding lands.

James Archbald's mother's paternal grandfather was Robert Wodrow (born, 1679, died, March 21, 1734), the author of *The History of the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland from the Restoration to the Revolution*. James Archbald's mother's father was Robert Wodrow (born, Dec. 21, 1711, died, Jan. 1784), minister of the Parish of Eastwood from 1735 to 1757.

In his *The Wyoming Vally, Upper Waters of the Susquehanna, and The Lackawanna Coal-Region...*, J.A. Clark gives, on page 159, the following information about the childhood of James Archbald: "The subject of our sketch passed by his early childhood, as most Scotch lads do, varying the care of the paternal flock with driving his boat amid the restless currents of the Firth, or daringly swimming through the surfs and around the crags which line the coast, very much after the manner of Hugh Miller, at Cremarty."

In 1807, James Archbald's parents, together with their son James, emigrated to the United States, and settled in Auriesville, Mongomery County, New York, where they purchased a farm.

Regarding this period of James Archbald's life, J.A. Clark reports (p. 159): "No railroad nor canals then afforded means of transportation, and the great Mohawk Valley turnpike was the main artery of travel. At the age of fourteen years, young James to whom thus early was committed the transactions of such business, might be seen driving his wagon load of wheat down the turnpike to Albany, some forty miles distant, where he sold his grain with the good judgment of maturer years. As he advanced toward manhood he became engaged in the varied pursuits of farming, lumbering, and finally trading to the then far distant Canadian line. While there he received an offer from the Northeast Fur Company, which he came near accepting, which would have entirely changed the course of his life."

At the same time, James Archbald eagerly seized every opportunity to improve his mind. Under the direction of his mother he received a fine education.

He was an ardent admirer of poetry and could recite lengthy passages from Burns and Byron as well as from the major British poets.

He was also a musician and a competent critic on artistic matters. His mother was a lady of great culture and superior literary tastes. Her library of 1,200 volumes was one of the best in the state of New York.

In 1817, when construction of the Erie Canal was begun, James Archbald became a contractor and built that portion of the Erie Canal that passed through his father's farm. The engineer in charge of the construction of the Erie Canal, John B. Jervis, was so impressed with James Archbald's capability as a builder and his integrity that he offered him a position on his engineering corps.

In 1825, John B. Jervis was given charge of building the Delaware and Hudson Canal, and made his protege, James Archbald, resident engineer in charge of a division.

Elected superintendent

In 1829, James Archbald was elected as a superintendent of the newly-formed Delaware & Hudson Canal Company. On Nov. 27, 1832, he married the youngest daughter of Thomas and Elizabeth (Frost) Frothingham, Sarah Augusta Frothingham.

Her father, who died in 1824, was a major in the Revolutionary War, and served in the New York Senate in 1821-1822.

James Archbald's wife died on July 5, 1874, at the age of 69.

Five children were born to them: I. James, born on Feb. 13, 1838; graduated from Union College and succeeded his father as chief engineer of the Delaware, Lackawanna and Western Railroad Company; served as

culty succeeded in getting permission to try it between planes Nos. 4 and 5.

"But so successful was this change when tried, that it was not only at once adopted along the whole line, butit was decided by Mr. Wurts, the President, not to mention the matter in his annual report, that the company might have full enjoyment and monopoly of the invention. This simple plan has been in use ever since, and in 1847, when Mr. Archbald took charge of the constructions of the Pennsylvania Coal Company's road, he laid it out in the same way."

On March 21, 1851, James Archbald was elected the first mayor of Carbondale.

He served the City of Carbondale in that capacity for four successive terms, 1851-1855.

During his first term of office, Carbondale did not have a city hall.

The city government was housed provisionally in the Methodist Church and in the Carbondale House. In 1852, Carbondale's first City Hall, a wooden Greek Revival building, was erected at a cost of $3,000, and it was in this building that James Archbald had his office during his last three years as mayor.

In 1854, James Archbald was elected vice president of the Michigan Southern and Northern Indiana Railroad, and he then resigned his position with the Delaware and Hudson Canal Company and the Pennsylvania Coal Company.

In 1855, James Archbald was chosen, by the general voice of the board of directors, to succeed the Honorable George W. Scranton as general agent of the Delaware, Lackawanna and Western Railroad Company. In 1857, James Archbald and his family moved